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IN pursuing the illustrations proposed in our last number, let us at the very threshold, look to that great, first book — the BIBLE. We shall here have an advantage of holding up character to view, with which we can no where else meet. It is the only mirror where men are represented with all their weaknesses, and all their deficiencies; as well as where full justice is

done to every virtue, and every attainment. In the histories which men give of each other, how difficult it is to come exactly at the truth! A virtue is often commended far beyond its merit, without perhaps ever looking for the motive, merely because it is of high esteem in the judgment of the biographer; at the same time a defect is covered either from the writers solicitude to give as perfect a character as possible; or because it appears trifling in his eyes. In such cases we see but half the man at best; and that half marred and shaded at the author's pleasure. But in the Bible, we see as it were the human heart laid bare. The passions are allowed their full swing, and their effects are faithfully depicted. Actions are judged, more from the motives which gave them birth, than from the consequences of those actions themselves. Crimes receive no palliating excuses, nor is vice covered by any false names. Whether the subject be a friend, or a foe, -

a saint or a sinner, he meets with the same faithful, delineating hand. The integrity and the usefulness of the first are applauded; the hypocrisy and infamy of the last are detected; and prejudiced indeed beyond the power of conviction, must that man be, who can rise from the perusal of scripture narrative, without admiring the accuracy, and extolling the justice, with which every character is described.

Prior to all others, both in time and rank, stands MOSES; who united in his own person the character and offices of the historian, the legislator, the intercessor, and the judge. combining all those qualities which constitute a great and an exalted mind, he leaves us ~~most~~ at a loss in which most to admire him. So complete did every power appear in this great leader, that in viewing his character in parts, we are placed in the same situation with the connoisseur, when introduced into a gallery of pictures by the first masters: Struck with equal

astonishment and rapture, as he proceeds to examine each, he gazes with silent admiration, and tries to make his choice; but in the midst of the constellation of talent and taste, he is unable to decide, and is obliged at last, to fix upon the whole, as the subject of his undivided approbation & esteem.

When we institute the comparison between Moses as a writer, and as a man, the resemblance will be found striking. At once disinterested, generous, & patriotic, he was yet inflexible in justice, prompt in punishment, & impartial in his decisions. The authority of the judge, and the compassion of the parent happily met in him. Zeal was blended with meekness, & firmness with urbanity. Modest to an extreme, as we see in his first interviews with Jehovah respecting his mission, he yet discharged his subsequent duties with a vigor never surpassed. His whole demeanor exhibited a dignified simplicity, as unimpaired

when he died on the mount of Pisgah, as when his rod became a serpent before the haughty king of Egypt. When called upon to allay those tumults, & to punish those rebellions, to which his unrighteous charge were so liable, we see him assume all the power with which God had invested him, and rising in awful dignity in proportion to the magnitude of the crime. At such times his voice seemed to thunder conviction on the offender's conscience, and to close the door of mercy to the culprit. The guilty read his punishment in the face of the judge; — the witnesses were all convinced of the rectitude of the sentence. Such was the man; but what are his writings?

Without attempting to give a fuller view of Moses as a writer, than the comparison requires, the first thing which will strike even the most superficial reader, is his simplicity. In the commencement of his interesting history, in how beautiful and artless a manner does he

introduce the creation and the fall. Unlike the pompous & voluminous historian, he does not enter into detail; his business seems to have been with bold, but rapid outlines. Distinctly but with brevity, he marks every great event. He sets out with making God the source of wisdom, of power, & of being. The heavens, & the earth, the sea, and 'all that in them is contained,' assume their various forms, and spring into existence at his command. Light follows his mandates, and unfolds the works of the Creator in their fullest glory. Darkness with equal promptitude at his nod, draws its sable curtains, and wraps in solemn silence a vast universe. The sun forever fixed displays his meridian power, and extends his cheering, fructifying influence round the globe. The moon, 'pale queen of night,' glitters through the trees, commingling her light with that of millions of surrounding stars to ~~light~~ guide the steps of the future travellers.

The tribes of inferior animals are created by the same Almighty word; and last of all Man, the image of his maker, starts into existence. No sooner is this accomplished, than his authority over the rest of the creation is fixed. His duties are pointed out, & the boundaries of his enjoyment are distinctly marked. A helpmate is found for him possessed of every lovely quality; and Eden is appointed for his happy residence. — The simplicity and dignity of style in which these things are related, is every way equal to the importance and grandeur of the subjects. But the sacred historian is soon called to quit the cheering, tranquil scenes of Paradise, and to enter on a work less congenial with his best, his highest wishes; — and his style expresses the change. Faithfulness and accuracy are its principal characteristics. He follows man from the moment of temptation to the commission of crime, without attempting for once to excuse his weakness, or to palliate his guilt.

In a manner peculiar to himself he makes the fallen being his own accuser. He points with prophetic ken to all the consequences of the fall; records some of its first fruits, & rapidly involves the world in ruin. A new field now opens to his powers. Human character is to be developed, and all its shadings accurately traced. Man appears almost another being from what we beheld him before the flood. Founders of nations rise up, & spread themselves on every side. The passions take a wider range; — separate, and jarring interests erect their claims, and lay foundations for present as well as future quarrels. Ambition, distinction, and love of power, begin more widely to extend their baleful influence; and now appear in embryo those very principles which in future ages actuated an

It was for the historian to draw the outlines only of his characters, and to present them to posterity unvarnished and unadorned; and with what fidelity and skill he

has accomplished his task. The impiety of Ham, the faith of Abraham, the gross iniquity of the Sodomites; the covetousness of Lot, and the knavery of Laban, are all delineated with marks of approbation, or of disgust, as the subject seemed to merit. It is however in unfolding the social affections that he peculiarly excels. Here he appears highly interested himself, and he equally interests his readers. The sly, devilish cunning of Rebekah; the cautious timidity of Jacob; with the contending emotions of anger for the disappointment, & revenge for the insult, in the breast of Esau, are all pourtrayed with the hand of a master. When Jacob flies to Padanaram, how finely is that affection described, which could withstand a mockery of fourteen years, for the object of his heart's desire. Perhaps however most of the historian's soul is called forth in the account of Jacob's family. Almost every passion which can agitate the human bosom, is there exhibited; and their direful consequences, when uncontroled, or their happy tendency when guided by a divine hand, are beau-

tifully displayed. Incest, cruelty, Envy, and revenge on the one hand; with purity, affection, fondness, and generosity on the other are all seen in some branch of this family. The solicitude of Jacob for his beloved son; the calm indifference of his unnatural brothers; with the eminent virtues of that son, whether in prosperity or adversity; — but above all, the meeting-scene, the affection & forgiveness of Joseph; the chagrin & contrition of the poor culprits before him, contrasted with his magnanimous behavior on the occasion; — all these together are so admirably described, that we doubt whether we have its equal in ancient or modern authors.

The moment our author introduces his own history, his character begins more fully to develope. Modesty and ingenuousness, are conspicuous throughout the whole relation. Unlike ambitious rulers, or vain conquerors, he does not emblazon his mighty deeds, either at the expense of truth and virtue, or to cover his defects. No; — with equal simplicity and candor,

he relates his great actions, and marks his recurring weaknesses. He records the instances of his affectionate concern for the welfare of Israel, and his innumerable efforts to promote it, with the same zeal and meekness as distinguished his own conduct on those momentous occasions. When called upon to exert his authority, how much is the accuracy and acuteness of the Lawgiver blended with the majesty of the Sovereign:— so when we come to consult what he has written at those periods, we see the pen with the same exactness, drawing the code by which his people were to be governed; and enforcing it with all that confidence of authority, which a [illegible] in Jeshurun had a right to assume. So nicely indeed do his own writings discriminate, and balance his character, that nothing more is necessary, than an attentive perusal, to give us a full knowledge of the man.

We postpone our further remarks

and illustrations on this interesting subject to another number.

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